Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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S E C R E T BANGKOK 26266

NODIS

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, TH,VM
SUBJ: PHAM VAN DONG TRIP POTPOURRI

1. I ATTENDED PHAM VAN DONG'S RECEPTION FOR PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK AND WITH OTHER DIPLOMATS AND US JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING HENRY KAMM, WAS ALSO ASKED TO STAY FOR BUFFET DINNER. IN THE RECEPTION LINE PHAM VAN DONG GREETED ME VERY LOUDLY IN VIETNAMESE WITH, "WE MUST NORMALIZE OUR RELATIONS NOW". I SAID IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO WORK TO IMPROVE OUR RELATIONS AND THAT I HOPED THAT HIS TRIP TO THAILAND WOULD ALSO LEAD TO IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH THAILAND. HE SAID HE BELIEVED IT HAD DONE THAT. AFTER ANOTHER EXCHANGE OF WELCOME, I WENT ON TO INDICATE THAT CONGRESSMAN MONTGOMERY'S TRIP HAD BEEN VERY USEFUL AND THAT WE WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETINGS IN NEW YORK BETWEEN ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE AND MR. THACH LATER THIS MONTH.

2. IT APPEARS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME CONFUSION ON THIS SCORE, THAT I WAS THE ONLY AMBASSADOR WHO WAS INVITED FROM COUNTRIES NOT HAVING RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM. THE AFP CORRESPONDENT HERE TOLD ME THAT VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR HAD TOLD HIM THAT US AMBASSADOR WAS BEING INVITED TO INDICATE VIETNAM'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED
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STATES, AND THIS HAD BEEN DONE AT THE EXPRESS REQUEST OF PRIME MINISTER PHAM VAN DONG. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT VIETNAMESE WERE MAKING A SMALL GESTURE IN INVITING ME AND CONTINUING EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A MORE FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR THEM IN THE STATES.
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3. AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE THE NEXT DAY, DONG WAS ASKED ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INVITATION TO US AMBASSADOR AND HE INDICATED THAT VIETNAM IS INTERESTED IN ENHANCING RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. DONG WAS EVASIVE IN RESPONDING TO A QUESTION WHETHER VIETNAM HAD DROPPED ITS DEMAND FOR ECONOMIC AID AS PART OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

4. A FEW HOURS BEFORE THE RECEPTION ON SEPT 9, PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK CALLED ME AND SAID NEGOTIATIONS ON THE COMMUNIQUE WERE VERY DIFFICULT. THE VIETNAMESE WERE PROVING VERY TOUGH AND WERE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO MAKE IT APPEAR THAT THAILAND WAS SUPPORTING VIETNAM IN REGARD TO ITS PROBLEMS WITH CHINA AND INSISTING ON THEIR WORDING ON THE ZONE OF PEACE. WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT HE WOULD DO, KRIANGSAK SAID, "WELL, I AM VERY TOUGH TOO". WHILE THE CALL LEFT ME A LITTLE UNCERTAIN AS TO WHETHER IT WAS A PRELUDE TO SOME THAI CONCESSION, SUCH TURNED OUT CLEARLY NOT TO BE THE CASE. I CALLED THE PRIME MINISTER SOME TIME AFTER THE COMMUNIQUE HAD BEEN ISSUED AND CONGRATU-LATED HIM ON THE COMMUNIQUE AND WHAT I PERSONALLY THOUGHT WAS A CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVED VIETNAMESE-THAI RELATIONS WITHOUT ANY ADVERSE EFFECT ON THAI RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND ITS ASEAN PARTNERS. HE SAID HE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH THE COMMUNIQUE. PHAM VAN DONG INITIALLY WAS VERY UNHAPPY BUT HAD CALMED DOWN AND KRIANGSAK FELT DONG WAS GENERALLY

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QUITE PLEASED WITH THE TRIP. ABRAMOWITZ

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